E/CONF.39/B/27
18 Oct.1962
ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

Agenda Item: B.3

United Kingdom

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COLLEGE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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by

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INTRODUCTION

1. Problems of war provoked much new thinking and a readiness for boldness in solving them, often bringing to bear the joint efforts of those who in peacetime tended to move in different spheres of life. In particular, those having to administer the United Kingdom's war machine and those responsible for the running of industry were brought into close contact with each other, while many in the academic world took up posts of senior responsibility in an advisory or executive capacity in government, in the civil service, in the armed forces.

2. A small group of eminent industrialists, educationalists and public servants met informally during the war to discuss the issues likely to face the country when peace came, and some of the lessons to be learned from the experience of war. One of the clearest of lessons was that there would be a continuing need for mutual understanding amongst those holding posts of responsibility, whatever their walk of life, and that educational experiment was called for in enabling already mature and experienced executives to acquire the subtle skills of higher administration. Their discussions took form with the decision in 1946 to found a College which would bring together men and women of ability and promise from industry, commerce, the trade unions and all forms of public service, as a means of fostering understanding between those carrying responsibility in differing spheres - the aspect singled out in the report of a previous United Nations Seminar which commended examination of the experience of the Staff Colleges in Australia, U.K. and India. (1) The decision was taken only after close consultation with leading personalities in many walks of life, a preparatory phase which was invaluable in clarifying the pre-conditions for success of such an institution. The College was established as an independent body, non-profit making, deriving most of its income from fees, the balance from voluntary subscription.

3. The first Principal, Mr. (now Sir) Noel Hall, was appointed in 1946. In 1960 he was elected Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford. Sir Noel Hall

(1) Public Industrial Management in Asia and the Far East; a selection from the material prepared for a United Nations Seminar held in New Delhi in December 1959; Department of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations (1960) ST/TAO/M15 - para. 52.

ther[illegible]re was responsible for the College's first fifteen years of life and it is he who can be regarded as the architect of the Henley course. The manner in which the Henley conception was evolved, the working out of its distinctive characteristics, must be largely attributed to him. In February of 1958 Sir Noel Hall was invited to be the first Ford Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance of New York University. On this occasion, in the course of three lectures (2) he expounded upon the various stages which make up the continuing process of management development, the problems of developing higher executives, and the nature of 'The Henley experiment'. Those with a special interest in management development would be well advised to read Sir Noel Hall's lectures.

OBJECTIVES AND COURSE DESIGN

4. The object of the College, defined a little more closely, is to provide an opportunity for those who have had ten to fifteen years of experience and are soon to have higher responsibilities, to reflect on their past experience and achievement and to consider their future within a course of studies designed to make them think about the main issues which confront those in important positions. Given this objective, a number of implications follow.

5. The emphasis should be on improving practice and the application of knowledge, rather than on theory and the disinterested advance of knowledge. Not that there is a sharp dividing line, but there are important differences. Given the calibre of participants and the College's aims, the approach must be founded upon active participation rather than on more traditional academic methods and teacher-student relationships. On the view that the comparative method is the most fruitful, the College should exploit the varied experience of participants, perhaps the College's richest asset. On any one session, there are 66 participants who are selected to represent between them a cross-section of the working life of the community and of the various functional areas of administration. It was judged at the outset that the College could not hope to attract the kind of participant in mind if the course of studies were longer than three months. This period was determined in the light of what was thought feasible at the time, but assuming a fresh start today and the possibility of a longer period it is doubtful if one would come to a very different answer.

6. Since attendance at Henley would happen only once in a lifetime and at a critical juncture in a man's career, it was important that the content and method should serve participants' longer-term needs and the changing nature of their work when they come to acquire wider and more senior managerial responsibilities. Here one has in mind the feel for broader issues so that a man gets away from his specialism and a preoccupation with detail, the skilful use of experts, effective delegation, the skills of oral and written communication and a readiness to take timely decisions.

(2) Sir Noel F. Hall: The Making of Higher Executives: The Modern Challenges, New York University (1958)

7. The criteria governing the selection of participants are critical. Those considered for nomination must first meet the College's conditions regarding experience, age, prospects and general ability. They must genuinely want to come to Henley Final selection is by competitive interview.

8. Given such objectives, an original approach was necessary in the design of the course of studies, its content and method.

9. The period of three months suggested that the right number to bring together on any one session was about sixty. Participants must have time to get to know each other and to work together in syndicate and in full session. There must be time for the staff to get to know them.

10. With participants a very mixed group and selection primarily by the criterion of experience rather than of educational attainment, appropriate teaching methods must be devised. Half the participants happen to hold a university degree or similar qualification, a proportion which can be expected to grow, but experience would still remain the cardinal test for selection, and teaching methods would reflect this.

11. The emphasis on individual responsibility and active participation combined with the need to work co-operatively, - the situation in higher management, - gave rise to the syndicate as the main pedagogic instrument, a syndicate being defined as a group set to carry out a specific task through co-operative effort. Each individual, working through and within his syndicate, must exercise responsibility.

12. The content of the course of studies should take as its focus the major issues which face the contemporary administrator, fitting them into a unified course structure. It is one of the achievements of the original conception of the Henley course that its main structure has proved itself as a stable foundation, having an inherent unity, while allowing for the flexibility that is necessary in adapting the issues to be studied to changing times and conditions. Within the basic framework, there is a division of subjects, each a demanding exercise in its own right, while yet making an appropriate contribution to the unity, coherence and build-up of the course of studies over the three months.

13. It is interesting to observe that somewhat similar thinking was at work in a different context, in the setting up of the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, which offers an instructive analogy. In conception, it goes back to 1951. The first course was held in January 1956. Rather than grafting onto an established academic centre, a new institution was formed. The objective is to improve practice, to help senior officials to discharge better their present jobs, or jobs to which they might be promoted in the future. The only common denominator of all participants is their extensive experience. The first prerequisite for success, in the view of its Director, is the process which governs selection of participants. (3)

(3) John H. Adler: Constituents of a General Programme in Economic Development: The Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, a paper given at the Second Annual Meeting of Directors of Training Institutes in the field of economic development, O.E.C.D. (Sept.1962)

14. Seen in terms of the task and responsibility of the educationalist, certain important points emerge.

15. There is the relationship between staff and participants. They are jointly 'members' of a body corporate, colleagues in a joint task rather than tutors and students.

16. Henley is characterised by the primacy of syndicate work, supported by whatever other facilities or devices suit individual facets of the course, e.g. visiting speakers and advisers, outside visits, special documentation, specific instruction - as in the use and abuse of figures. Instruction is given where, in the College's view, the general level of understanding is inadequate. There is the attempt to stimulate the critical faculty in reading habits through systematic consideration of sources of current information, and the study of biographies, an apparent diversion in the early stages with a very positive bearing upon later subjects.

17. Method, content and participants cannot be considered apart. The course has its own intrinsic intellectual content, but many issues of group management are posed through the method of work, if only because tasks set are real tasks, individual responsibilities are real responsibilities.

18. The problem of keeping the emphasis on improved practice, while yet exploiting the contributions of the academic and the relevant developments taking place at the boundaries of knowledge, is difficult. Here the work of the Research Department is of particular importance. Along with its own research effort, it has the responsibility to maintain close contact with the academic world, to interpret new developments, and where there is a need to write papers which will help bring to practitioners of management an understanding of the new thinking arising from research. The closest of contact is necessary with the world of practice and particularly with nominating organisations.

HENLEY'S INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER

19. From the earliest days of the College, overseas interest in the College was substantial. Moreover, it was important that the course of studies should have an international dimension, not just by the special studies with an international theme which are part of its intellectual content, but by giving an international flavour to the whole of the work undertaken.

20. Ten per cent of available places are reserved for overseas candidates. These may come from any part of the world, from public service, central or local, from industry, commerce, finance and transport. There have by now been over two hundred from 37 different countries, all of whose education and practical experience have been outside the U.K. These figures do not include those of British origin working abroad. Because each session is divided into six syndicates, this means that each syndicate always includes one person from abroad.

21. The College has also been closely connected with overseas developments in management training. Many overseas visitors have spent substantial periods at the College studying its methods, and seeing something of the staff work which is so decisive in ensuring the effectiveness of the course.

22. By 1950 enquiries were being received from many parts of the world about the possibility of help being given to informal groups or official bodies overseas seeking to set up similar organisations. Partly because the resources of the College, both in men and money, were very limited, partly because it regarded its own methods as experimental, the College initially dealt cautiously with them, though it gave full facilities for accredited overseas visitors and provided written reports and suggestions.

23. In 1954 as a result of developments in Australia and in India, the College became much more actively involved. In both, the outcome was the setting up of an institution along Henley lines. More recently, as a result of interest shown by Pakistan, a College has been set up there with the financial help of the Ford Foundation and the joint collaboration of Syracuse University and Henley.

24. In addition the College has helped to formulate and implement schemes for advanced training in public and business administration in the West Indies, in Turkey and in Yugoslavia. Other projects are in the enquiry stage.

25. For the purpose of this conference, it would be fruitful to say a little more about India and Pakistan. A reminder is appropriate that by educational standards Henley itself is still quite young, while the Indian College started only five years ago and the Pakistan College is in its third year. These ventures must therefore be regarded as experiments, though undoubtedly not without useful lessons for others.

THE INDIA AND PAKISTAN COLLEGES

26. The Administrative Staff College of India opened in 1957. Fifteen sessions will have been held by the end of 1962. The opening session had thirty participants. This has now risen to nearer fifty. In composition, usually two-thirds come from the private sector, the others from central government, the state governments and nationalised industries.

27, The essential structure of the course of studies is very similar to that of Henley, but there are interesting differences. More explicit emphasis has been placed upon the importance of a close acquaintance with the social and political environment, and a deep understanding of the inter-relationship between different sectors of the national economy, especially an appreciation of how the respective roles of public administration and business management complement each other in achieving national objectives. Special studies are also made of selected industries, aspects of the five-year plan and the role in general of government in economic development.

28. In addition, tours are arranged to various organisations in different parts of the country. Some use is made of case studies and in this help has come from Harvard University, posing the interesting question of how best to link up case studies in a timely way with the main issues being considered.

29. The Pakistan College was established in 1960. There will have been five sessions by the end of 1962. At present there are twenty participants per session, soon to be increased to thirty. Two vacancies are reserved on each session for candidates whose education and practical experience have been outside Pakistan; this number will be increased to three from January 1963.. (Australia has a similar policy and has welcomed participants from South-East Asia, the Middle East, Pakistan and Nigeria.)

30. In composition the preponderance lies with the civil service. They may number seven in a syndicate of ten, with one from a public corporation, two from business and sometimes one from overseas. The main weight of support comes from the central government, the governments of West and East Pakistan and the public corporations.

31. The Ford Foundation helped financially in establishing the College, and Henley and Syracuse University jointly are assisting in the formative stage. The distinctive experience that each is able to bring, coupled with the over-riding criterion that the course of studies must reflect Pakistan's needs and conditions has led to the evolution of a course of studies, which particularly in its methodology has considerable originality.

32. The course is in two halves. In the first, a number of subjects are considered under the heading of General Administration, using primarily the syndicate method. Running parallel with this, is a seminar on the theory and practice of Development Administration and the Economics of Development, which also provides background material for individual work. Each participant, under the guidance of the College staff, has to prepare a seminar paper which is finally presented to the College as a whole. Subjects for individual study range over a wide field. The Constitution and the Basic Democracies form special studies also in this phase.

33. In the second half of the course, the subjects studied in syndicate are Programme Administration (social welfare, education, agriculture and industry) and the Role of the Administrator. Parallel with these are two major field exercises, one taking place in East, one in West Pakistan.

34. The Research Department of the Pakistan Staff College has been given a very ambitious role, in anticipation that the College will become a major centre for enquiry into problems of national development. A significant publishing programme has also been formulated.

35. The Pakistan College constitutes an instructive example of attuning ideas and approaches borrowed from the U.K. and the U.S.A. to the needs of a country with very different traditions and problems, a venture which is bound to be a rich source of experience in international collaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

36. From the nature of the Henley approach, in particular its dependence upon an adequate cross-section of different types of experience, it will be evident that a College along Henley lines will be most effective in its early stages where a country contains within itself a good range of experience. This is not to suggest that many of Henley's features, or the use of the syndicate as an educational instrument, cannot find useful application in the most diverse circumstances, but Henley stands for much more than that. Because of this, far from wishing to see 'Henleys' across the globe, the College has used its influence to advocate to those interested in establishing a Henley type of institution that they should examine most carefully and critically if such a College would be appropriate to their objectives and circumstances. Speaking generally, it is becoming less necessary now to stress the importance of a country's own educational traditions, stage of development, her size and diversity, as factors which should be uppermost in the minds of those seeking to transplant educational practice from one country to another, but there have been costly mistakes in the past in the field of management education through ignoring or unduly discounting such factors.

37. Having said this, what might be regarded as the essentials of a Henley type of course? It must be intensive, demanding and satisfying to participants. Primacy would understandably be given to syndicate work. Much therefore depends on securing the right kind of participant from a good cross-section of organisations. For this the College must command respect and confidence at the highest levels in government, business and educational circles. The College must be very close indeed to its nominators and to those in the academic world working in relevant disciplines. Environment and location are essential factors in securing the development of that corporate atmosphere wherein the exchange of experience can reach its most fruitful form.

38. Those concerned with establishing such an institution or programme must be prepared for the most intensive preliminary study and discussion. Any course of studies is demanding in this way, Henley more than most, because of the somewhat novel nature of its objectives and approach. The preparations necessary for each session are also very demanding.

39. A particularly acute problem in newly developing areas is how best to ensure a comparable level amongst participants. Much thought has to be given - at Henley and elsewhere - to this problem and to the efforts that might be necessary to ensure this for example through some form of pre-course preparation. This requires that the College should be experimental in its attitude, flexible in the design and timing of the programme and in exploiting various educational methods.

40. Staffing is not easy. The need, a combination of rich experience and academic depth, men who will be as much at ease in the world of the academic as in the world of practice whether in government or business, involves a rare and rather difficult balance.

41. There is the familiar dilemma between the sense of urgency of those grappling with the problems of development and the time that is so desirable if serious educational mistakes are to be avoided.

42. Given the establishment of a College, one would hope that it would provide some places on each session for participants from other countries. This is to the advantage of the College itself. It can also have an attraction in its own right to nominators, indigenous or not.

43. One also looks hopefully to the prospects of joint endeavours between colleges in different countries. There is the closest of collaboration between Henley and her sister institutions to mutual benefit, and there is ample scope for such collaboration not only in the formative stage, but in the field of comparative studies and research, once a College is established.

44. Henley is encouraged by the interest which its own efforts have aroused in other parts of the world and by the recognition demonstrated by this Conference of the critical role of the quality of administration in translating the advances of science and technology into the more tangible benefits of social and economic progress. Such problems are common to all countries, whatever their stage of development. Even in advanced countries the social, economic and administrative implications of applying science and technology have not been sufficiently recognised. Scientific and technological progress itself as well as application depend upon important decisions of policy which have to be taken by those in the highest positions of responsibility. This poses a critical educational task, in ensuring that those who take the decisions and those who are responsible for implementing them are sensitive to implications and have a command of the necessary skills which govern successful application. A very conscious awareness of this task lies at the heart of the Henley conception.

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